



BROOME EMPOWERMENT VILLAGE
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The M. A .D. E Institute of Flint, Michigan supports legislation to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction to 18. Michigan is one of 9 remaining states automatically prosecuting 17-year-olds as adults for any offense. This antiquated practice is contrary to research, exceptionally harmful to youth and directly threatens public safety. To reduce reoffending rates and cut corrections costs, it is time for Michigan to act.

Michigan recognizes 18 as the age of adulthood to voteⁱ, legally sign a contractⁱⁱ, drop out of schoolⁱⁱⁱ, rent a hotel room^{iv} or car^v, or purchase tobacco^{vi}, fireworks^{vii} and lottery tickets^{viii}. 17 year-olds **are still considered children** whom the state's child welfare system must protect from abuse and neglect. Yet, if caught in the legal system for any reason, 17-year-olds must be prosecuted and sentenced as adults in Michigan's courts.

Research confirms that 17-year-olds are not adults. As part of normal development, they are more likely to take risks and are highly susceptible the negative influences of peers.^{ix} Though these age-related factors may contribute to mistakes, 17-year-olds are much more amenable to rehabilitative programs. Nonetheless, Michigan prohibits 17-year-olds from accessing youth-focused treatment found only in the juvenile system.^x

Prosecuting youth in the adult system is harmful and threatens public safety. **Most 17-year-olds in the court system are held in adult jails and prisons where they are at imminent risk of physical and sexual violence, restraints, solitary confinement and suicide.** Without access to age-appropriate services, young people exiting adult prison are 34% more likely to reoffend compared with their peers in the juvenile justice system.^{xi} An adult conviction also has lifelong consequences, including barriers to education, employment, and housing.

Michigan's juvenile justice system is highly effective at delivering developmentally-appropriate services and sanctions that hold youth accountable, engage the whole family in treatment, keep kids in school, and reduce reoffending. As a result of declining youth arrests rate^{xii} and increased use of diversion, Michigan's juvenile courts have seen dramatic reductions in their caseloads. Many juvenile detentions and residential treatment centers are well below capacity, with some bed usage under 50% capacity.^{xiii} Michigan's juvenile justice system has the ability provide far better treatment to most, if not all, 17-year-olds in the adult justice system.

Several states recently increased their age of juvenile jurisdiction, citing public safety and cost-savings as the reason for change. Those states reported little to no cost impact, due to supporting effective diversion and community-based treatment. In fact, they see a long-term cost-savings, saying that by including 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system \$3 will be saved for every \$1 spent.^{xiv}

For the reasons stated above, we support the proposed legislation to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18. House Bills 4947-4954.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leon El Alamin', written over a horizontal line.

Leon El Alamin, Executive Director